

[Home](#) > [About NIH](#) > [Public Access](#)

NIH Public Access Policy Authors' Manual

What does the policy say?

The Policy requests and strongly encourages all NIH-funded investigators to make their peer-reviewed author final manuscripts available to other researchers and the public at the NIH National Library of Medicine's (NLM) PubMed Central (PMC) (<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov>) immediately *after* the final date of journal publication. Authors are given the option to release their manuscripts at a later time, up to 12 months after the official date of final publication. NIH expects that only in limited cases will authors deem it necessary to select the longest delay period.

NIH anticipates that investigators, or their designees, will submit an electronic version of the author's final manuscript ***upon acceptance for publication***, resulting from research supported, in whole or in part, with direct costs from NIH. The author's final manuscript is defined as the final version accepted for journal publication, and includes all modifications from the publishing peer review process. A separate submission to the NIH manuscript submission (NIHMS) system is not necessary if a manuscript has been accepted by a PMC journal that permits free access in 12 months or less (Also note, PMC, a full text repository, is not the same as PubMed, a citation index). The list of journals participating in PMC can be found at: http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/front-page/fp.fcgi?cmd=full_view.

NIH is requesting that authors submit manuscripts resulting from 1) currently funded NIH research projects or 2) previously supported NIH research projects if they are *accepted* for publication on or after May 2, 2005. The Policy applies to all research grant and career development award mechanisms, cooperative agreements, contracts, institutional and individual Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards, as well as NIH intramural research studies. The Policy applies to peer-reviewed, original research publications that have been supported in whole or in part with direct costs¹ from NIH, but it does not apply to book chapters, editorials, reviews, or conference proceedings. Publications resulting from non-NIH-supported research projects should not be submitted.

Please see the NIH Public Access Web site (<http://www.nih.gov/about/publicaccess/>) for more information about the Policy. To submit manuscripts please visit the NIHMS system <http://www.nihms.nih.gov/>.

How will authors submit their manuscripts?

The password-protected, Web-based, NIHMS system (<http://nihms.nih.gov/>) has been developed to facilitate the submission of authors' final peer-reviewed manuscripts to PMC. This system allows easy identification of NIH grant numbers (past and present) and NIH intramural project numbers by associating them with the corresponding extramural or intramural Principal Investigator (PI) of the research study. Manuscript files can be uploaded to the NIHMS system by the PI or, with the author's permission, a 3rd party designee (e.g., administrative personnel, librarians, publishers, etc.) and then associated with the appropriate grant or project number(s).

In all cases, only PIs can approve the Submission Statement to complete the submission process. The Submission Statement (see NIHMS FAQ for complete text: <http://nihms.nih.gov/faq.html>) includes the approval of the submitted materials and the delay for public release following journal publication. Currently, the system is designed for individual submissions, but procedures for batch processing of multiple submissions are being explored and may be developed in the future. Also note that users are able to track the status of their manuscripts throughout the submission process.

How to Submit the Manuscript

- Go to the NIHMS system (<http://www.nihms.nih.gov>).
- Click on “Log in” on the right side of the screen.
- Select the appropriate log in option (Note: the same log in should be used for all subsequent visits to the NIHMS system):
 - **“eRA Commons”** for NIH extramural PIs, grantees or applicants (see [“What is the NIH eRA Commons?”](#) below).
 - **“NIH”** for NIH staff (e.g., intramural research program (IRP)).
 - **“MyNCBI”** is for all others including 3rd party author designees (e.g., assistants, libraries, publishers, etc.).
- Provide basic information, including the journal title, PI name and contact information, and associated NIH award number(s).
- Immediately upon acceptance for publication, upload the complete manuscript(s). The NIHMS supports a wide variety of file types (MS Word, Word Perfect, PDF, jpeg, Excel, etc.), and will accept the same manuscript and supplemental image files (e.g., figures, tables, or supplementary information) that were submitted to the journal for publication. Just as provided to publishing journals, submit high-resolution images to ensure that they can be viewed properly in PMC.
- The NIHMS will generate a receipt of the uploaded files in PDF format. The PDF receipt summarizes the information entered into the system and merges the manuscript's files into one viewable document.
- Confirm that the manuscript and any additional supporting documents have been successfully received by NIHMS, and verify the document.

Note: Authors must complete the remaining steps. 3rd party designees have completed the upload process at this point.

- Authors must confirm that the manuscript and any supporting documents have been successfully received by NIHMS, and verify the document.
- Review and approve the Submission Statement and specify the timing of posting of the final manuscript for public accessibility through PMC. Authors and/or their institutions should ensure that their final manuscript submissions to PMC are consistent with any other agreements, including copyright assignments that they may have made with publishers or other third parties.
- Upon approval of the submission by the PI, the manuscript will be converted into XML — the standardized digital format used by PMC.
- Review the XML manuscript as it will appear in PMC once the conversion has taken place (PIs will be notified by e-mail when the document is ready for review) and correct any errors, if necessary. After PI approval, the article will be publicly accessible through PMC after journal publication plus any delay specified by the PI.

What is the NIH eRA Commons?

The NIH eRA Commons is an NIH Web interface system developed to facilitate the discrete exchange of essential information between NIH and applicant organizations. The “Commons,” available at <https://commons.era.nih.gov/commons/>, is where NIH and the grantee community are able to conduct their extramural research administration business electronically. For example, this system allows PIs and institutional officials varying levels of online access to the status of their grant applications and details associated with their grant awards.

An NIH eRA Commons account is required for extramural PIs to enter into the NIHMS system and complete the submission process. If you do not have an account, click on “eRA Commons” at the NIHMS system Web site, and then click on “Create New Account” above the Username box. Submitting authors do not need to be a currently-funded NIH investigator in order to quickly create an unaffiliated Commons account.

If you have questions about creating an account with full PI accessibility (e.g., affiliated account), please contact the Sponsored Research Office (or equivalent) at your institution. If you have questions, problems, or comments regarding the NIH eRA Commons system, contact the NIH eRA Commons Help Desk at commons@od.nih.gov (Phone: 866-504-9552).

How will authors benefit from submitting their full text articles to PMC?

By submitting their peer-reviewed manuscripts, authors will enjoy several benefits of the Policy. First, PIs and institutions can use the manuscript submission as an alternative means to fulfill the existing requirement to provide publications as part of progress reports. Current NIH grants policy for progress reporting requires that one copy of each publication not previously submitted, including manuscripts submitted or accepted for publication, be provided to NIH.² Beginning with progress reports submitted August 1, 2005 (i.e., progress report submissions for Fiscal Year 2006 funding), a reference to the PMC submission identification number may be included in progress reports in lieu of submitting a hard copy of the publication. If this method of submission is chosen by the grantee, this will replace the hard copy submission for any “published” or “accepted for publication” manuscripts.³ Please note that other aspects of annual Progress Reporting requirement cannot be completed through the NIHMS system. Those materials must be submitted through the normal Progress Report submission process.

Second, by adding their manuscripts to PMC, which is a comprehensive, integrated, biomedical information technology system, authors will benefit from the modern information technology tools already available in PMC (e.g., PubMed, GenBank, Genome Map Viewer, Molecular Database, MedlinePlus, Clinical Trials, Taxonomy, Small Molecules (PubChem), DNA, Protein Sequences, and Protein Structures, etc.) that are being used currently with thousands of full text articles already submitted by nearly 200 journals. These tools will help scientists explore information across scientific fields or within narrow topical areas. This data mining and cross-linking of information should lead to new lines of research, as well as more comprehensive approaches to understanding the diverse and ever expanding amount and type of scientific data.

Lastly, authors will have the ability to ensure timely public access to their research manuscripts. Once their manuscripts are electronically available to the public and researchers through PMC, authors will benefit from higher visibility of their research. In addition, publishers can submit the full text journal article and any publisher links to the article or article corrections for posting at PMC.

Author manuscript submissions also translate into benefits for the public and NIH. Ensuring access to the full text of publicly-funded NIH research findings will improve the public's understanding, use, and appreciation of biomedical research findings. Having a comprehensive archival system will enable NIH to manage its research dollars more efficiently and to understand better its research portfolio, monitor its scientific productivity, and help set priorities. It will also facilitate the creation of an end-to-end, paperless grants management process.

What are some of the common questions about the policy?

Is Submission Under the Public Access Policy Required?

No, it is voluntary, and there are no penalties for authors who do not submit their manuscripts to NIH. However, NIH strongly encourages all NIH-funded investigators to make their peer-reviewed author final manuscripts available on PubMed Central, and NIH anticipates broad participation by NIH-funded investigators.

Will this Policy be an added burden to NIH-supported investigators and research institutions?

No, Public Access Policy submissions will provide NIH-supported investigators with an alternate means by which they can fulfill the existing requirement to provide publications as part of progress reports and other application and close-out procedures. It is anticipated that in the future investigators applying for new and competing renewal support from the NIH will also utilize this resource by providing links in their applications to their PubMed Central archived information. NIH anticipates that this may reduce, rather than increase, burden for investigators who choose to use this method as part of their application/progress report/close-out submissions.

Does NIH's Public Access Policy Affect Copyright?

No, the NIH Policy explicitly recognizes and upholds the principles of copyright. Authors and journals can continue to assert copyright in NIH-funded scientific publications, in accordance with current practice. While individual copyright arrangements can take many forms, NIH encourages investigators to sign agreements that specifically allow the manuscript to be deposited with NIH for public posting on PubMed Central as soon as possible after journal publication. As an example, the kind of language that an author or institution might add to a copyright agreement includes the following:

Journal acknowledges that Author retains the right to provide a copy of the final manuscript to NIH upon acceptance for Journal publication or thereafter, for public archiving in PubMed Central as soon as possible after publication by Journal.

For more frequently asked questions visit the Public Access Policy Web site at <http://www.nih.gov/about/publicaccess/> or the NIHMS system Web site <http://www.nihms.nih.gov/>.

1. Costs that can be specifically identified with a particular project or activity. NIH Grants Policy Statement, Rev. 12/2003; http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps_2003/NIHGPS_Part2.htm#_Toc54600040.
2. See PHS 2590 Instructions at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/2590/2590.htm>
3. See <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-007.html>

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